DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 662 HE 016 542

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TITLE Faculty Issues: Surviving the Stress of the Eighties.
PUB DATE 19 Jul 83
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Change; *Change Strategies; *College Faculty; Faculty College Relationship; Faculty Development; Financial Problems; Fund Raising; Higher Education; *Participative Decision Making; Problem Solving; Resource Allocation; Retraining; *Retrenchment; Teacher Employment

ABSTRACT

Problems that threaten the future careers of faculty and the quality of education at colleges and universities are reviewed, based on a literature review. It is suggested that new federalism, decreased revenue, declining enrollments, increased state and federal regulations, and public demand for accountability have threatened the ability of higher education institutions to retain their vitality and to attract quality and innovative faculty. Three broad categories of strategies developed to combat these threats are: fund-generating strategies, organizational strategies, and expanding career strategies. Fund-generating strategies are either external revenue generating (i.e., new funds brought to the institution from new external sources), or internal revenue generating by reallocation of existing funds. These revenues are then used to hire new faculty, or retrain old faculty to meet demand in growing areas. Organizational strategies involve faculty in the development of solutions to solve problems. Expanding career strategies are characterized as counseling faculty to consider other career options. This may involve retraining for another academic area, or a career outside of academe. The retraining is usually supported financially by the institution. (Author/SW)

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ED233662

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Faculty Issues: Surviving the Stress of the Eighties

A Study Submitted for the Course
Faculty Issues
Taught By
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July 19, 1983

HE 016 542

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Faculty Issues: Surviving the Stress of the Eighties

Introduction

As Dr. Globe closed the trunk of his car and headed down the street towards his new office in the business district, Dean Cropson stared out the window wondering what the future would bring. From his experience he knew that Dr. Globe was probably one of the most productive and innovative faculty members he had the pleasure of working with in his 40 year career in higher education. Dr. Globe had been a faculty member at IOU for seven years, since the fall of 1985 to be exact. He had received excellent evaluations, was elected faculty member of the year by his peers, and was given a special IOU Presidential award for obtaining a large federal grant for President Rogan's Excellence in Education Program, money that was to be used to update the library.

Dean Cropson felt bad, having been the one to tell Dr. Globe that his request for tenure had to be denied on the grounds of no tenure positions available. It had been several years since a tenure position was available at IOU, and it looked as though it would be quite some time before another tenure position would open. Dr. Globe, though wanting to stay in higher education, was forced to take a position with JCO

International.

As the fumes from Dr. Globes car dissipated Dean Cropson wondered. Where are experienced faculty replacements going to come from? Is it possible to retain IOU's reputation for producing quality graduates, with faculty educated in a time much different than today's? Where are the new innovations going to come from?

Just then the phone rang. It was the local retirement office returning Dr. Cropson's previous call. The voice on the other end of the phone could be heard, "Yes, to receive full retirement benefits you must be 70. But if you want to retire now you can receive 60% of those benefits." After thanking the voice on the other end of the line, Dr. Cropson hung up the phone, pulled out his five year planner and drew a red line on the date marked August 10, 1997, his seventieth birthday.

New Federalism, decreased revenue, declining enrollments and public demand for accountability (Peel, 1982) have brought institutions of higher education closer to the ficticious scenario described above. Problems, such as retention of quality young faculty in a time where tenure and financial crisis have all but eliminated tenure track positions, are threatening the ability of institutions to meet the needs of future students. Traditional methods of introducing innovative ideas by the continuous introduction of new faculty members may not be available in the future.

What caused these problems? How are institutions preparing to solve them? What innovations provide potential

solutions? Is their really a need for these innovations? What are the implications?

It is the purpose of this paper, based on a survey of literature, to address these questions and to discuss their implications in relationship to the future careers of faculty and the quality of education at institutions of higher education.

Causal Conditions

During the early 1970's the nations colleges saw a dramatic growth of students and faculty (Karle, 1982; Wolotkiewicz, 1980). Financial resources, through Federal programs, doubled bringing about the greatest academic expansion institutions of higher education had ever encountered (Wolotkiewicz, 1980).

Statisticians beleived that the growth in student enrollment would continue until the year 2000, a prediction which today seems to be false (Wolotkiewicz, 1980; Baldwin, 1982). Recent predictions suggest that by 1993 there will be a decrease of more than three milllion college people, and that by 1985-1986 the number of high school graduates is expected to decline dramatically (Wolotkiewicz, 1980). Add to this double digit inflation and it is easy to understand why colleges and universities are struggling to meet their financial obligations.

Dr. Richard Rhinehart, in his introduciton to "collegial Environment Vitality" suggest that declining

enrollments can be expected to affect faculty in three major ways; the necessity to reduce expenditures is likely to force the university to reduce the number of faculty; faculty in some disciplines will be underemployed and; the university's inablitiy to hire new faculty members will reduce the inward flow of new ideas (Rhinehart, 1982).

In addition declining enrollment will reduce the mobility of faculty, thus faculty will tend to stay at one institution for a longer period of time (Karle, 1982; Baldwin, 1981).

In addition to the financial and enrollment factors, increasing demands for accountability, multiplication of Federal and State regulation and staff reductions have created an atmosphere of stress among top and middle management of the college. As a result the productivity and creativity of those who must provide critical support of the academic program have diminished, characterized by increased illness, frustration, tension and lack of enthusiasm (D'Amico, 1982; Keane, 1982; Rhinehart, 1982). In this atmosphere it is hard to conceive an institution's abilty to retain quality faculty.

Thus, literature seems to suggest that decreasing financial support, decline in enrollments, and an increase in Federal and State regulations has brought about the problems of retaining quality faculty and bringing new innovations to colleges and universities.

Innovative Solutions

If colleges and universities are to survive the crises caused by the previously mentioned factors, it will be necessary for them to provide an environment which increases the vitality of the institution in ways much different than in the past. The environment, if left unchecked, will be one that widens the gap between academic ideals and institutional realities resulting in the undermining of morale (Powell, 1981).

Some suggest that responsibility for implementing changes to meet this challenge fall on the senior administrator, and that their most difficult task will be to balance the collegial tradition of consultation with managerial accountability (Rhinehart, 1982).

For colleges and universities to remain vital there has to be recognition of the need for altering career expectations of the past, expectations that are unrealistic in today's restructured institution. The majority of faculty now in our colleges and universities are in the middle of their careers. They began these careers in a time when the values of society and their expectations were much different than the realities of today. When they look to their future and see the likelihood that the expectations of their career are not going to be fulfilled they respond by becoming demoralized. They go about their teaching and research without energy, enthusiasm or a sense of purpose (Baldwin, 1981).

Maher suggests that a vital institution is one that

possesses a clearly defined, shared and accepted mission; has attainable proximate goals and programs which enable fulfillment of the mission and; sustains a climate which empowers individuals to be participants in the fulfillment of the mission and to have the sense of being involved in a creative, productive and energizing worklife (Maher, 1982). Can institutions continue with vitality in the environment of the 1980's?

If the answer is to be yes, it will be necessary to address three clusters of faculty (Baldwin, 1981). The first cluster are those faculty who probably will not receive academic tenure and will face an involuntary career crisis. The second cluster are those mid-career faculty (aged 36-45) who may be forced to teach at the same institution for 20 to 30 years, and the third group, those senior faculty members who need help to make a successful transition to retirement.

A search of literature shows that institutions are responding to these needs in very innovative ways. These can be categorized into three major groups: fund generating strategies; organizational strategies and; expanding career options strategies.

Fund Generating Strategies

These strategies are based on the generation of new funds from new sources, or reallocation of funds from existing sources by various cutbacks in non productive programs. The Carnegie Commission described six approaches:

1.selective cutbacks;2.across the board percentage cuts in budgets;3.consolidation of existing programs;4.readaptation of existing programs;5.application of Harvard's "every tub on it's own bottom" approach;6.central reassignment of vacated positions (Baldwin, 1982).

These would seem to be approaches that increase the problem of introducing new faculty in certain areas, or even eliminating faculty and programs in other areas.

Organizational Strategies

These strategies are characterized by the involvement of faculty in their development. They consist of various structures which tend to take an organized approach at addressing typically the uniqueness, of a problem existing at an institution.

A. Manpower Flexibility Options- These options strategies include early retirement, reduced workload, shared workload, retraining and transfers and exchanges, in combination with a structure to prepare faculty for one of the options.

Monroe Community College's approach to combat the demoralizing effects of retrenchment was the establishment a committee which met with senior and junior members of the faculty to help them consider plans for retraining, as well as getting them involved in meeting the challenge of the problems that arise and relate to the utilization of faculty.

A one day workshop was held for faculty, administrators

and civil service staff to stimulate interest in the need for planning. After the workshop an evaluation and followup was conducted, the results made available to the entire college community. The results of this activity were the development of a prior step to layoff, a one year notice to faculty and an additional one year notice to the department designated as a target to receive individual layoff letters, if the current enrollments trends continue (Retrenchment, Morale, 1982).

Various faculty development programs are also included in this category. By faculty development we mean, as Jerry Gaff defines it, "enhancing the talents, expanding the interests, improving the competence and otherwise facilitating the professional and personal growth of the faculty members, particularly in their roles as instructors."(Karle, 1982). The goal is to make professionals more effective in satisfying their own needs as well as their student's, college's and society at large.

Seminars are held and operated with no special funding and staffed by faculty who volunteer to share their own areas of special interest or expertise.

Results of the first year's planning was a series of six seminar/workshops related to the theme "Focus on Faculty". Topics included, Benefits, The art of Publishing, Academic Life in the 80's: Burnout Part I and Part II, The Management, and Microcomputers. The success of the program was felt in terms of increased interest and participation in the seminars.

B. Dynamic Leaders-Another strategy being used is the

hiring of administrators who in addition to their service function, are able to provide leadership in the areas of resources, people, goals and programs and through collaboration with faculty reverse enrollment trends (Wolotkiewicz, 1980). This can range from the redefining of a major area in terms that attract more students into that major area, to strategies that attract research dollars.

C. Team Leadership Strategies-These strategies involve the development of teams which are formed into task forces to study and develop solutions to various faculty and institutional problems.

The University of Akron developed such a team leadership program with six interrelated steps. These included selection of participants, a weekend retreat, eight full day class sessions, meeting once a week for eight weeks, task forces, internships and evaluation. Selection was based on invitations which described the program and ask each faculty member to apply for consideration. Selection was made with the idea of developing an equal mix of faculty and administration (Maio & Buchtel, 1977).

There were three major thrusts of the program: interaction and communication; understanding of the structure and dynamics of the university organization and operation and; issues in education.

The results were that team skills were developed which could be taken back and applied to each participants department or division thus allowing them and those they develop to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to

become part of major decision making.

The major benifit of these strategies is that faculty and administrators feel a belonging, that the institution's problems are also theirs (Maio & Buchtel, 1977).

Expanding Career Strategies

These strategies are characterized by career counseling of faculty to identify either new academic areas of interest to the faculty member, or new careers outside of education, with the institution assisting in the financing of the new career training.

Some institutions have awarded minigrants in hopes of encouraging faculty to develop and adopt innovative classroom projects or develop new careers. Merit pay,, sizable raises and sabbaticals, as well as low cost intrinsic rewards such as reduced teaching load, leaves of absences, appointments to key committees and recognition by collegues and administration, have also been used to motivate faculty.

Implications

Impications are that institutions will be able to retain quality faculty and innovation, but not in the traditional way of importing from outside the institution. It is obvious that both innovation and the development of faculty will have to be developed within the walls of the institution and programs will have to be developed to

encourage the occurance of both.

In the future more time and money can be expected to be spent in developing positive attitudes towards the institution by the faculty which teach within it's walls. Less money will be available for middle management, so the task of attitude changes will more than likely be the responsibility of task force committees or the results of faculty seminars, staffed and planned by the faculty themselves.

Top level administrators will find themselves spending more of their time developing acceptance of decisions within the collegial atmosphere for the sake of survival. This will probably result in a faculty which is better informed and more understanding of administrative problems when making decisions.

Innovative changes which are bound to occur in the college curriculum offer an opportuniy to redefine the training of faculty, and could cause a reoccurrence of the need for a liberally educated faculty, with several specialty areas, rather than one very specialized area of study.

Conclusion

New federalism, decreased revenue, declining enrollments, increased state and federal regulations and public demand for accountablity have threatened the ability of institutions of higher education to retain their vitality as well as attract quality and innovative faculty.

Many strategies have been developed to attempt to combat these threats. These can be categorized into three broad categories: fund generating strategies; organizational strategies and; expanding career strategies.

Fund generating strategies are characterized as being either external revenue generating, i.e. new funds brought to the institution from new external sources, or internal revenue generating, by reallocation of existing funds. These revenues are then used to hire new faculty, or retrain old faculty to meet demands in growing areas.

Organizational strategies are characterized as involving faculty in the development of solutions to solve problems. Potential solutions such as manpower flexibility, dynamic leadership, team leadership, and faculty workshops have resulted from this strategy. Emphasis is concerned with helping the faculty to understand and create solutions.

Expanding career strategies are characterized as counseling faculty to consider other career options. This may involve retraining for another academic area, or a career outside of academe. The retraining is usually supported financially by the institution.

Implications are that colleges and universities will be able to retain quality and innovative faculty, but not in the traditional method of recruiting from outside their institutional walls. Strategies will have to be developed within each institution to foster the development of quality and innovative faculty.

Top level administrators will find it necessary to spend more time and money developing positive faculty attitudes towards the institution.

The inevitable curricular changes to occur offer an opportunity to redefine the education of faculty and may bring about a reoccurance of the need for a liberally oriented education.

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